A 9012-24

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
1989 ELECTED OFFICIALS SURVEY
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

January, 1990

What do you think will happen, in your city's next budget, will the following be raised, held constant or reduced?

	Raised	Held Constant	Reduced	Don'tKnow
Taxes	39	54	4	3
Fees	49	45	1	5
Number of Municipal Employees	31	59	7	3
Budget Spending	63	26	8	3

How would services in your community be affected next year if city tax rates are not increased?

Expand Service Levels	25%
Maintain Service Levels	65%
It Will Not Be Possible To Maintain Service Levels	9%
Don't Know	1%
Total	100%

What happened to city service levels in the past year (1989) and what will happen to city service levels next year (1990)?

	Last Year (1989)	Next Year (1990)
Increase	43	41
Decrease	5	5
Remain Constant	52	52
Don't Know	0	2
Total	100%	100%

How would you characterize your community's financial capacity to keep up with infrastructure needs? Would you say your financial capacity is:

Not Keeping Up	23
Keeping Up	67
Enabling Us To Get Ahead	10
Total	100%

Overall, how would you say your <u>state</u> government is currently responding to the needs of cities and towns?

Excellent	3
Good	28
Fair	47
Poor	22
Total	100%

Changes in Community Conditions

	Worsened	Improved	No Change	Don't Know	Inapplicable
Drugs	58	9	31	2	0
Cost of Living	45	7	47	1	0
Affordability of House Prices	42	26	30	1	1
Cost of Energy	41	12	46	1	-
Crime	37	20	42	-	1
Solid Waste	36	30	34	-	-
Affordability of Rental Hsg.	34	21	41	2	2
Availability of Low Income Housing	24	22	45	1	8
Streets, Roads, & Sidewalks	20	52	28	-	-
Poverty	19	8	60	3	10
Homelessness	18	10	43	1	28
City Fiscal Conditions	17	42	39	2	-
Health Care	15	33	47	2	3
Overall Economic Conditions	14	46	40	-	-
AIDS	13	3	38	17	29
Air Quality	13	20	63	1	3
Water & Sewer	13	48	36	0	3
Education	12	35	53	-	-

(more on next page)

Local Mortgage Conditions	12	34	49	5	-
Public Transportation	10	21	47	-	22
Changes in Interest Rates on City Borrowing	9	40	42	6	3
Availability of Social Services	8	40	49	1	2
Unemployment	8	41	49	0	2
Supply of Energy	4	18	75	2	1

Grade the federal government's performance on each of the following.

Numbers in first six columns are the percentage of officials assigning this grade on the issue. For example, 47 percent of the officials gave the federal government a C,"fair" grade on the handling of housing issues.

A = Excellent
B = Good
C = Fair
D = Poor
F = Fail

	A	B	C	D	F	dk	avg.*
Housing	2	14	47	25	10	2	1.7
Homelessness	1	8	30	35	22	4	1.3
Drugs	2	15	32	29	21	1	1.5
Clean Air	1	31	41	18	8	1	2.0
Budget Deficit	0	5	20	31	43	1	0.9
Poverty	1	9	42	29	17	2	1.4
Education	2	24	43	25	6	0	1.9
Disaster Assistance	11	48	25	7	3	6	2.6
Oversight of Financial Institutions	2	9	27	29	31	2	1.2
Waste Disposal	0	10	38	35	15	2	1.4
Transportation	3	33	40	16	5	3	2.1

dk = don't know

* average is equal to grade point average on a 4 point scale, with an A grade equal to 4 points, a B equal to 3 points, C equal to 2 points, D equal to 1 point, and an F equal to no points.

The sum of all grades is divided by the number of grading officials to compute the average shown in this far right hand column.

Imagine that the White House is scanning the horizon to be alerted to new domestic issues in America. They want to learn about issues that are increasingly important but have not yet received sufficient attention. You are asked to talk to President Bush about one such topic. What topic would you choose? (open - ended question)

Drugs	19
Financial Aid & Mandates	15
Education	10
Housing & Homelessness	9
Environment *	7
Solid Waste	6
Federal Government Finances **	5
Health	5
Transportation	3
Poverty	2
Unemployment, Lack of Jobs	2
"All Other" Topics ***	17
Total	100%

* "Environment" includes that term as well as water, sewage, air quality and toxics.

** Federal Finances include such topics as: Finances, Deficit, Defense Spending, Cut Foreign Aid, and Economy.

*** "All Other" topics includes 28 categories none of which received a 2 percent response. Topics include: Economic Development, Infrastructure, Crime, Insurance, Youth Issues, Zoning, Public Safety, Citizen Involvement, Equal Representation, Telephone Services, Immigration, Small City Issues, Cost of Living, Child Care, Family Issues, Ethics, Social Services, Federal Actions, Minimum Wage, Equal Pay, Social Security, Abortion, Congressional Pay, Senior Citizens, Quality of Life, Savings and Loans, Courts and Disaster Assistance

What would you say are the two most important problems facing your community? (Asked as an open-ended question.)

Tax and Finance Issues *	27
Solid Waste	23
Environment **	21
Transportation	18
Growth and Development ***	18
Drugs	17
Infrastructure	14
Economic Development	12
Crime & Public Safety	10
Housing	8
Lack of Jobs, Unemployment	7
Education	6
"All Other" ****	12
No Response	7
Total	200%

Responses total 200 percent (each respondent got two)

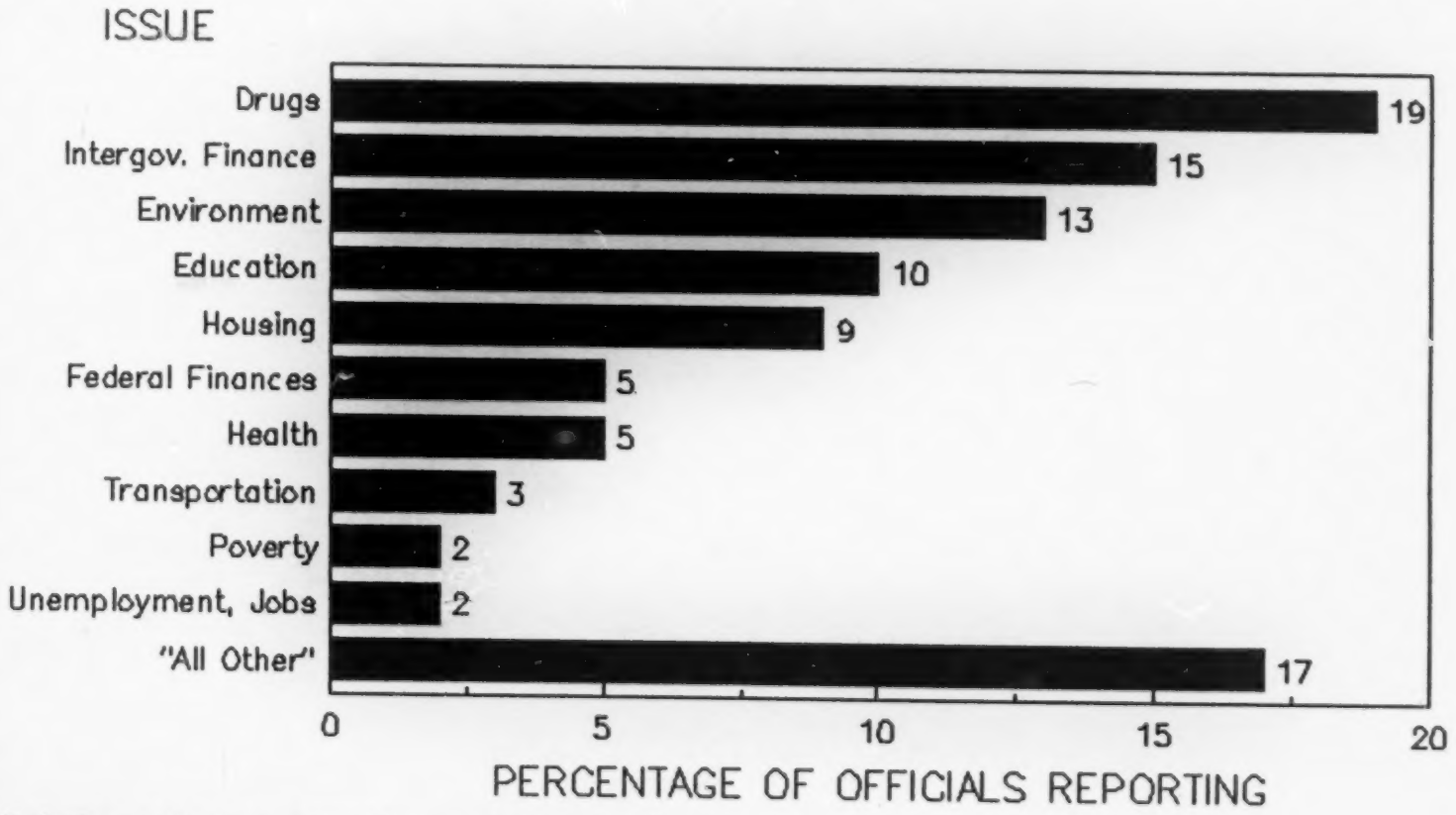
* Tax and Finance issues include: Revenue Shortages, General Budget and Finance Issues, Taxes, Tax Base, and State Aid Issues.

** Environment includes that term and other issues such as: Water, Sewer, Air quality, Drainage & Flooding, and Toxics. It does not include Solid Waste.

*** Growth and Development issues include: Growth, Lack of Development, Stabilization of Community, Zoning, Open Space, Annexation, Outmigration, Waterfront Development and Planning.

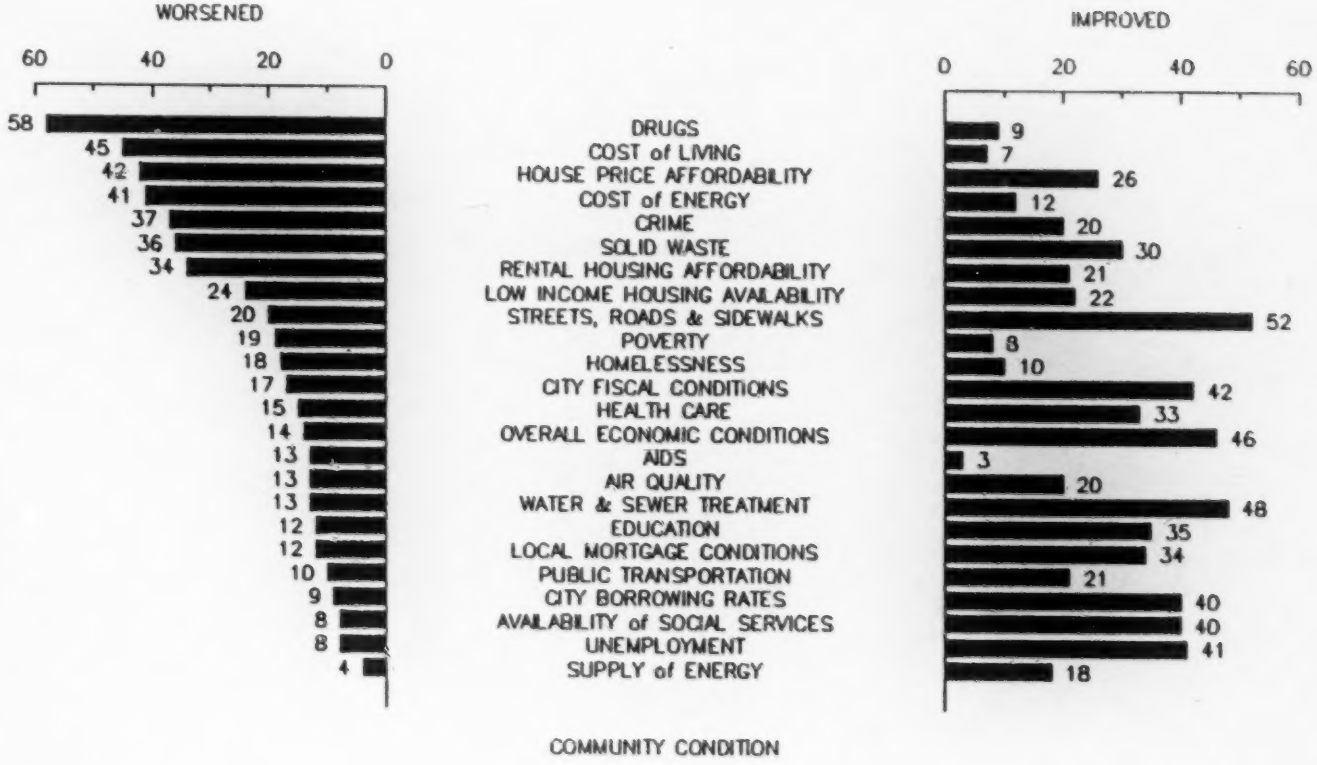
**** "All Other" , none of which equals 2 percent individually, includes: Homelessness, Labor Force, Service Levels, Insurance, Race Relations, Image, Retail Sales, Youth Activities, State Actions, Emergency Medical Services, Citizen Involvement, Municipal Labor Force, Negative Publicity, Senior Citizens, Gangs, Clean-up, Government Organization, Culture, Equal Representation, Teen Pregnancy, Telephone Service, Single Parents, and Immigration.

CITY OFFICIALS WANT TO TALK TO PRESIDENT BUSH
ABOUT THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS

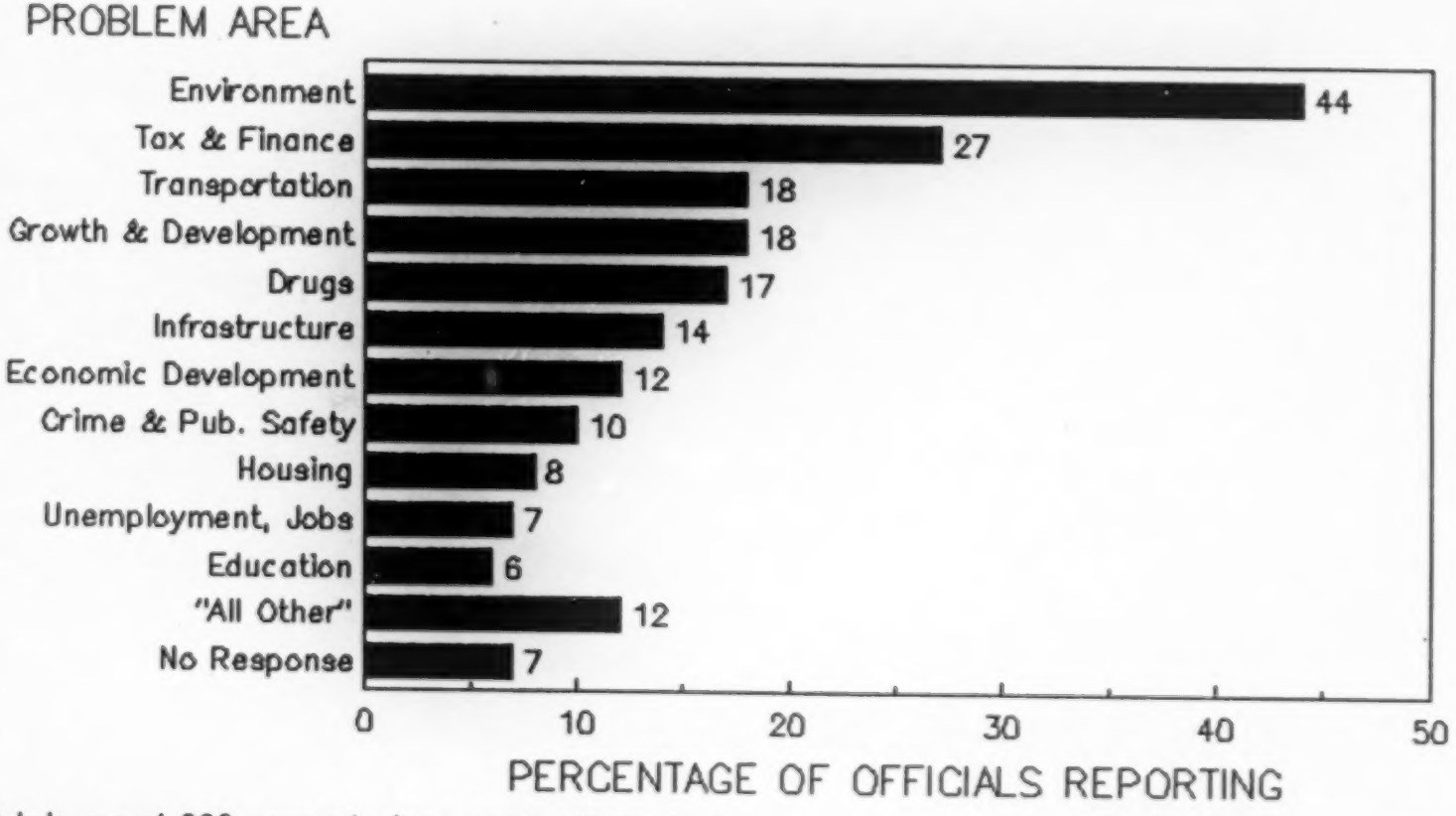


What domestic issue would you choose to discuss with President Bush, which is increasingly important but hasn't received enough attention?

CHANGE IN COMMUNITY CONDITIONS



MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS FACING COMMUNITY



Totals equal 200 percent since each official had an opportunity to identify two problems considered most important in their community.

NEWS

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Worsening Drug Problem Is Top Issue Local Officials Want to Discuss with Bush; NLC Opinion Survey Shows Many Expecting to Raise Local Taxes and User Fees; Some Conditions Improving, but Federal-State Effort Seen Lagging on Problems

Drug problems continued to worsen in 58 percent of the nation's cities and towns last year, and drugs are the No. 1 issue that local officials would want to talk about in a meeting with President Bush, according to the annual NLC opinion survey of municipal officials.

The survey findings, based on telephone interviews with 314 municipal officials in November and December, were released today by NLC Executive Director Alan Beals at a news conference in Washington.

Focusing on a question that asked what they would want to discuss with the president, Beals said, "Clearly, our local leaders believe there is a need for national leadership and a stronger commitment of national resources to help eradicate the poisonous and violent drug culture that has invaded our cities."

He noted with dismay that the recent distribution of $2.2 billion in federal anti-drug money all went directly to the states. While some state pass-through is called for, he said a direct federal link is needed to cities, "where the war against drugs is being fought."

Other top issues that local leaders identified for a White House meeting included financial constraints and unfunded federal mandates, solid waste and other environmental problems, education and affordable housing.

"These are problems that not only affect the citizens and taxpayers of each city or town; these also present opportunities for coordinated efforts to find effective solutions," Beals said.

(more)

During the 1980s, said Beals, municipal leaders have become innovative and resourceful problem solvers in what he described as a "decade of dynamic new localism in our system of government. We think the 1990s can and must be the decade to get federal and state government turned on and plugged into these ideas and this energy," he added.

Fiscal responsibility is a key factor in local decisionmaking, said Beals, and the survey found the city leaders willing to face tough financial decisions.

The report found nearly 40 percent of the survey group expecting to raise local taxes this year, nearly half projecting hikes in user fees, two-thirds anticipating increased budget spending and nearly one-third looking at growth in their municipal workforce.

Asked about their capacity to maintain the basic infrastructure in their cities, two-thirds said they could keep up and 10 percent said they even expect to stay ahead of their current needs.

While finding those numbers encouraging, Beals noted a "disturbing response" by 23 percent of the officials who feel their community does not have the capacity to keep up with basic infrastructure needs.

"The world now appears to be on the threshold of a new era of changing relationships and priorities that will test our nation in many ways," Beals said. "It's not a good sign when almost one in four cities is worried about its ability to keep up, and we should not tolerate 'fend-for-yourself' policies that lead to second-class cities and services for our people."

The survey found a mixed response as to how community conditions have changed over the past year. A third or more of the group said 1989 showed improvements with regard to streets, roads and sidewalks, overall economic conditions, unemployment, availability of social services, interest rates on municipal borrowing, their city's fiscal conditions, local mortgage rates, education and health care.

While drugs topped the list of worsening conditions, a third or more of the officials also mentioned cost of living, affordability of housing, cost of energy, crime, solid waste and affordability of rental housing.

A majority said they were holding their own, but not making much progress, with poverty, clean air and the supply of energy in their communities. Areas showing improvement among fewer than 10 percent of the survey group were AIDS, cost of living, poverty and drugs.

(more)

Beals noted that many of the lingering problems involve issues that cross municipal boundaries, and he noted that the survey found little enthusiasm for the way that state and national leaders are helping out.

Asked about how their states are responding to municipal issues, 47 percent described their relationships as "fair" at best, and 22 percent said they were poor. On the positive side, 28 percent judged their state relations to be good, and only 3 percent said they were excellent.

When asked to grade the federal government's performance on a list of key issues, local officials gave grades of "poor" to "fair" for Washington's efforts on drugs, poverty, waste disposal, homelessness, housing in general, education and oversight of financial institutions.

Nearly half judged handling of the budget deficit to be a total failure. The only issues given marks of "fair" to "good" were clean air, transportation and disaster assistance.

Beals said local government leaders recognize there is a common national stake in dealing with these difficult problems. "Resources and strategies can be developed at different levels of government, but the local dimension is the ultimate test of impact and effectiveness," he said.

"This isn't an exercise in buck-passing, or even a simple matter of 'buck-sharing,' either," Beals said. "Instead, it's a suggestion that the way to get the most bang for the buck is to blend the resources and capabilities of our intergovernmental system in the ways the will work best."

The survey was prepared by NLC, and the telephone interviews were conducted by the Center for Urban Studies at Wayne State University in Detroit from a random sample of elected officials in cities above 10,000 population. The results have an expected confidence of 95 percent, plus or minus 5.5 percent.

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